


## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

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1. (Currently amended) A rolling method for rolling a strip of material with a constant width in a strip rolling mill, the strip rolling mill including a pair of upper and lower work rolls for rolling the strip of material, intermediate rolls for supporting the work rolls, and back-up rolls for supporting the intermediate rolls, wherein each of the work rolls is provided with a tapered portion near one end thereof and the tapered portions of the work rolls are arranged on opposite sides of roll bodies thereof with respect to roll axis directions, the rolling method comprising the steps of:

 ~~setting axial positions of the work rolls at desired work roll~~ fixed axial positions so that the work rolls are not axially moved while the strip of material with a constant width is being rolled, said fixed axial positions being such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material, ~~fixing the axial positions of the work rolls so that the axial positions of the work rolls are not moved while the strip of material is being rolled, and~~

changing axial positions of the intermediate rolls to control a thickness distribution in a width direction of the strip of material while the strip of material is being rolled.

2. (Previously presented) The rolling method according to claim 1, wherein the control of the thickness distribution in the width direction of the strip of material is to mainly control a

thickness distribution near widthwise edges of the strip of material.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously presented) The rolling method according to claim 1, wherein at least portions of the work rolls at the points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start are formed in an arc.

5. (Currently amended) The rolling method according to claim 1, wherein the ~~desired work roll~~ fixed axial positions are changed according to a change in the width of the strip of material being rolled.

6. (Currently amended) ~~The A~~ rolling method ~~according to claim 1,~~ for rolling a strip of material with a constant width in a strip rolling mill, the strip rolling mill including a pair of upper and lower work rolls for rolling the strip of material, intermediate rolls for supporting the work rolls, and back-up rolls for supporting the intermediate rolls, wherein each of the work rolls is provided with a tapered portion near one end thereof and the tapered portions of the work rolls are arranged on opposite sides of roll bodies thereof with respect to roll axis directions, the rolling method comprising the steps of:

setting the work rolls at fixed axial positions so that the work rolls are not axially moved while the strip of material with

a constant width is being rolled, said fixed axial positions  
being such that points at which the tapered portions of the work  
rolls start come within the width of the strip of material, and  
changing axial positions of the intermediate rolls to  
control a thickness distribution in a width direction of the  
strip of material while the strip of material is being rolled,  
wherein reversible rolling is performed by reversing the  
rolling direction.

7. (Currently amended) The rolling method according to  
claim 1, wherein the ~~desired work roll~~ fixed axial positions are  
set so that an average of an actual edge drop value and a target  
edge drop value in at least one strip of material being rolled  
almost agree.

8. (Previously presented) The rolling method according to  
claim 1, wherein the axial positions of the intermediate rolls  
are controlled based on a difference between an actual edge drop  
value and a target edge drop value in at least one strip of  
material being rolled.

9. (Currently amended) A rolling method for rolling a  
strip of material with a constant width in a strip rolling mill,  
the strip rolling mill including a pair of upper and lower work  
rolls each having a tapered portion near one end thereof, and a  
drive mechanism for moving the work rolls in roll axis  
directions, the rolling method comprising the steps of:

providing at least one control means for controlling a thickness distribution in a width direction of the strip of material being rolled,

setting ~~axial positions of the work rolls at desired work roll~~ fixed axial positions so that the work rolls are not axially moved while the strip of material with a constant width is being rolled, said fixed axial positions being such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material, ~~fixing the axial positions of the work rolls so that the axial positions of the work rolls are not moved while the strip of material is being rolled, and~~


controlling a thickness distribution in a width direction of the strip of material while the strip of material is being rolled by the control means.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Previously presented) The rolling method according to claim 9, wherein the control means for controlling the thickness distribution comprises at least one of means for axially moving intermediate rolls, means for applying a bender force to the work rolls, means for applying a bender force to the intermediate rolls, means for using a thermal crown of the work rolls, means for crossing at least one of pairs of rolls, and means for changing a rolling load or draft.

12. (Previously presented) The rolling method according to claim 9, wherein the axial positions of the work rolls are set so that an average of an actual edge drop value and a target edge drop value in at least one strip of material being rolled almost agree.

13. (Previously presented) The rolling method according to claim 9, wherein the thickness distribution is controlled based on a difference between an actual edge drop value and a target edge drop value in at least one strip of material being rolled.



14. (Currently amended) A rolling method for rolling a strip of material with a constant width in a strip rolling mill, the strip rolling mill including a pair of upper and lower work rolls for rolling the strip of material, intermediate rolls for supporting the work rolls, and back-up rolls for supporting the intermediate rolls, wherein each of the work rolls is provided with a tapered portion at a vicinity to one end thereof, the tapered portions of the work rolls are arranged on opposite sides of roll bodies thereof with respect to roll axis directions, each of the intermediate rolls is provided with a tapered portion at a vicinity to one end thereof, and the tapered portions of the intermediate rolls are each arranged on a side opposite, with respect to a roll axis direction, to the tapered portion of the associated work roll in contact therewith, the rolling method comprising the steps of:


setting ~~axial positions of the work rolls at desired work~~  
~~roll~~ fixed axial positions so that the work rolls are not axially  
moved while the strip of material with a constant width is being  
rolled, said fixed axial positions being such that points at  
which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within  
the width of the strip of material, ~~fixing the axial positions of~~  
~~the work rolls so that the axial positions of the work rolls are~~  
~~not moved while the strip of material is being rolled, and~~

changing axial positions of the intermediate rolls to  
control a distribution in a width direction of the strip of  
material while the strip of material is being rolled.

15. (Currently amended) A rolling method for rolling a  
strip of material with a constant width in a strip rolling mill,  
the strip rolling mill including a pair of upper and lower work  
rolls for rolling the strip of material, intermediate rolls for  
supporting the work rolls, and back-up rolls for supporting the  
intermediate rolls, wherein each of the work rolls is provided  
with a tapered portion at a vicinity to one end thereof, the  
tapered portions of the work rolls are arranged on opposite sides  
of roll bodies thereof with respect to roll axis directions, each  
of the intermediate rolls is provided with a tapered portion at a  
vicinity to one end thereof, and the tapered portion of one work  
roll and the tapered portion of one intermediate roll are  
arranged on opposite sides of roll bodies thereof with respect to  
roll axis directions on the same upper side as well as on the  
same lower side, the rolling method comprising the steps of:

setting ~~axial positions of~~ the work rolls at ~~desired work roll~~ fixed axial positions so that the work rolls are not axially moved while the strip of material with a constant width is being rolled, said fixed axial positions being such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material, ~~fixing the axial positions of the work rolls so that the axial positions of the work rolls are not moved while the strip of material is being rolled,~~ and

changing axial positions of the intermediate rolls to control a distribution in a width direction of the strip of material while the strip of material is being rolled.



16. (Currently amended) A rolling method for rolling a strip of material with a constant width in a strip rolling mill, the strip rolling mill including a pair of upper and lower work rolls for rolling the strip of material, intermediate rolls for supporting the work rolls, and back-up rolls for supporting the intermediate rolls, wherein each of the work rolls is provided with a tapered portion at a vicinity to one end thereof and tapered portions of the work rolls are arranged on opposite sides of roll bodies thereof with respect to roll axis directions thereof, the rolling method comprising the steps of:

setting ~~axial positions of~~ the work rolls at ~~desired work roll~~ fixed axial positions by a work roll axial position setting mechanism so that the work rolls are not axially moved while the strip of material with a constant width is being rolled, said fixed axial positions being such that points at which the tapered

portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material, ~~fixing the axial positions of the work rolls so that the axial positions of the work rolls are not moved while the strip of material is being rolled, and~~

changing axial positions of the intermediate rolls by an intermediate roll axial position moving mechanism to control a distribution in a width direction of the strip of material while the strip of material is being rolled.

17. (Currently amended) A strip rolling facility for rolling a strip of material with a constant width comprising:

a pair of work rolls each having a roll outline shape at vicinities to first ends of roll bodies thereof, the roll outline shape having a tapered portion decreasing in diameter toward the roll end, the tapered portions of the work rolls being arranged on opposite sides of the roll bodies with respect to roll axis directions;

intermediate rolls;

a moving mechanism for moving the work rolls in the roll axis directions; and

a mechanism for setting ~~axial positions of the work rolls at desired work roll positions such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material and fixing the~~ fixed axial positions ~~of the work rolls~~ so that the ~~axial positions of the work rolls are not axially moved~~ when the strip of material with a constant width is being rolled, said fixed axial positions being such that points



at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material;

wherein axial positions of the intermediate rolls are changeable to control a thickness distribution in a width direction of the strip of material while the strip of material is being rolled.

18. (Currently amended) A strip rolling facility comprising:

work rolls each having a tapered portion near one end thereof;

intermediate rolls;

a moving mechanism for moving the work rolls in roll axis directions;

a mechanism for setting ~~axial positions of the work rolls at desired work roll positions when a strip of material with a constant width is being rolled such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material and fixing the~~ fixed axial positions of the work rolls when a strip of material with a constant width is being rolled so that the ~~axial positions of the work rolls are not~~ axially moved, said fixed axial positions being such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material; and

control means for controlling a thickness distribution in a width direction of the material while the strip of material is


being rolled by changing axial positions of the intermediate rolls.

19. (Currently amended) A strip rolling facility comprising:

work rolls each having a tapered portion near one end thereof;

intermediate rolls;

a moving mechanism for moving the work rolls in roll axis directions;

 a mechanism for setting ~~axial positions of the work rolls at desired work roll positions when a strip of material with a constant width is being rolled such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material and fixing the~~ fixed axial positions of the work rolls when a strip of material with a constant width is being rolled so that the ~~axial positions of the work rolls are not axially moved, said fixed axial positions being such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material;~~

means for measuring or estimating a thickness distribution in a width direction of the material; and

control means for controlling the thickness distribution in the width direction of the material in such a way as to reduce a difference between a target thickness distribution in the width direction of the material and the measured or estimated thickness distribution in the width direction of the material by changing

axial positions of the intermediate rolls while the strip of material is being rolled.

20. (Currently amended) A strip rolling facility comprising:

a pair of work rolls each having a roll outline shape at vicinities to one ends of roll bodies thereof, the roll outline shape having a tapered portion decreasing in diameter toward the roll end, the tapered portions of the work rolls being arranged on opposite sides of the roll bodies with respect to roll axis directions;

a pair of intermediate rolls for supporting the pair of work rolls;

a pair of back-up rolls for supporting the pair of intermediate rolls;

a moving mechanism for moving the work rolls in the roll axis directions;

a mechanism for setting ~~axial positions of~~ the work rolls at ~~desired work roll positions when a strip of material with a constant width is being rolled such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material and fixing the~~ fixed axial positions ~~of the work rolls when a strip of material with a constant width is being rolled~~ so that the ~~axial positions of the~~ work rolls are not axially moved, said fixed axial positions being such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material;

a moving mechanism for moving the intermediate rolls in roll axis directions; and

control means for changing during a rolling operation axial positions of the intermediate rolls according to a thickness distribution in a width direction of the material.

21. (Currently amended) A reversible rolling facility for a strip comprising:

a pair of work rolls each having a roll outline shape at a vicinity to one ends of roll bodies thereof, the roll outline shape having a tapered portion decreasing in diameter toward the roll end, the tapered portions of the work rolls being arranged on opposite sides of the roll bodies with respect to roll axis directions;

a pair of intermediate rolls for supporting the pair of work rolls;

a pair of back-up rolls for supporting the pair of intermediate rolls;

a moving mechanism for moving the work rolls in the roll axis directions;

a mechanism for setting ~~axial positions of~~ the work rolls at ~~desired work roll positions when a strip of material with a constant width is being rolled such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material and fixing the~~ fixed axial positions ~~of the work rolls when a strip of material with a constant width is being rolled~~ so that the axial positions of the work rolls are

not axially moved, said fixed axial positions being such that points at which the tapered portions of the work rolls start come within the width of the strip of material;

a moving mechanism for moving the intermediate rolls in roll axis directions; and

control means for changing during a reversible rolling operation axial positions of the intermediate rolls according to a thickness distribution in a width direction of the material.